

# 5



## CHAPLAINCY EVERYWHERE SESSION FIVE

### WHAT DO CHAPLAINS DO? BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This session draws together many of the themes from the previous four sessions in order to provide a rich description of chaplaincy. We will hear four chaplaincy stories which are based upon real life examples and draw out some practical tips. We will also consider the extra dimension that chaplains often bring to a place or situation.



## Welcome

We have come a very long way since we first met together to explore the ministry of chaplaincy. The picture of chaplaincy that has been painted depicts a powerful ministry which is out there, where people are at. The potential for members of the local church to operate in their local community as chaplains is immense. We hope that by the end of this session you too will be well on the way to thinking about how you might contribute to a chaplaincy team in your own area.

This session brings together everything we have thought about through stories that are based upon real life examples of chaplaincy. You will see that the real life actions of chaplains are in many ways very ordinary, yet because what they do is both intentional and courageous, the ordinary becomes anything but! When you speak to chaplains, they probably don't realise how powerful the work they do is, yet observe them for any length of time and you will realise that what seems to be ordinary has the power to change the world as they collaborate with God in re-creative work. You too can become a part of this understated yet powerful work.



## Opening prayer

*Take a few moments to focus upon God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You might find it helpful to light a candle or play some music. At an appropriate time, say together the words of the following prayer.*

God who is present here, you meet us in the humdrum of life.

In the everyday things you speak to us; through the ordinary you come to us.

In those familiar places, your Spirit is at work to renew and enliven us.

We thank you for chaplains who are intentional about the way they care.

We thank you for their courage to move out of their own comfort zones.

We thank you for words and actions that heal, restore and encourage.

We thank you for your love which flows towards us and through us.

We receive it with gladness and share it with grateful thanks.

**Amen.**



## § Present, pastoral, prophetic

The ministry of chaplaincy can helpfully be explained as having the following three characteristics: chaplaincy is **present**, **pastoral** and **prophetic**. In a very real sense these three qualities follow one another as a chaplaincy ministry develops.

Chaplains first have to be present in a particular place. Such a presence is no ordinary presence but a negotiated presence. In other words, chaplains inhabit a place in an official capacity. This brings with it the responsibility to act in a way that honours and respects the organisation they work within and also represent Christ and the Church in a credible way.

As chaplains get established as an authentic and reliable presence within an organisation, relationships begin to develop and opportunities for pastoral care arise. Noticing people, asking how someone is doing and listening carefully and with care to their responses can often lead to a real transformation for those who are heard. Often, chaplains offer critical pastoral care and even intervene in situations of life and death among those who are particularly vulnerable.

As a result of a chaplain's consistent presence and by offering genuine and consistent pastoral support, there often comes a special authority that means that at specific times they might speak or act prophetically. The prophetic ministry in relation to chaplaincy draws attention to what God is doing in a situation or might be challenging an organisation to do. Bringing an injustice to light, confronting an abuse of power or creating a solution in response to a problem are all prophetic actions. These activities might be described as the prophetic outcome of chaplaincy; the extra dimension that chaplains can bring to an organisation.

Together, the ministry of being a consistent presence, the power of genuine pastoral care and the impact of a prophetic word or action at the right time, which is brought with grace, love and humility, forms a powerful and genuinely world transforming ministry. This is the potency and potential of chaplaincy!

In the rest of this session, we will hear about what real chaplains get up to and consider what we can learn from their experience.

# Chaplaincy stories



READER FROM GROUP

## Sarah: chaplain to older people in Dorset

Sarah has been a chaplain to older people in a small market town in Dorset for the past two years. There is a significant and growing ageing population locally and the churches in the area joined together to provide a chaplain for 20hrs a week. Sarah works alongside those who reside in five care homes and also regularly visits those who are unable to leave their homes.

When Sarah visits people in their homes, she will often administer communion, which she is able to do as a lay reader in the Anglican Church. The emphasis for her chaplaincy is about making the time to listen to those who might be lonely or feel limited by older age.

## Chaplaincy tip: keeping good records

Relationships are at the heart of chaplaincy. It is often those little things like remembering people's names, important anniversaries, looming events and ongoing situations that makes a difference to people's lives. A chaplain might be the only person to take an interest in someone on a regular basis.

At the end of each day, Sarah makes some simple journal entries. Usually a line with a date, persons visited and a few words. 'Fred seemed down today', 'Jim has an operation this week', 'Sheila is concerned about her daughter', 'Jenny is nervous about her doctors appointment next week'. These notes act as little prompts and reminders for her ongoing conversations and prayer. Two years into the work and ten journals later, it is clear that taking simple notes is proving to be a very effective discipline. Remembering details matter!



GROUP CONVERSATION

## How might you go about keeping records?

Talk about how you might go about remembering names and details? Come up with a plan that holds this valuable information in a discreet way. Do you already have a system that is similar to Sarah's?



## Prophetic outcomes: networking and memories

In the short time that Sarah has been working as a chaplain in the community she has been able to make two important contributions that might be thought of as prophetic outcomes.

The care homes in the town work independently from one another. Sarah visits each one regularly and has quickly become a trusted person in each of the homes, not only by the residents but also among the staff. The activity managers at each of the homes were facing similar issues to do with trips and creative ideas and had talked independently to Sarah about them. Sarah was able to introduce the activity managers to one another so that information and resources could be shared. This has led to better care and also to greater cohesion in the community and cooperation among the staff at the homes.

Not only that, but one of the key areas that Sarah is trying to both understand and address is the growing number of people living with dementia and what can be done to help untangle what memories remain through sensitive visiting, and even remembering on their behalf. As a chaplain, Sarah is becoming an advocate for those with dementia. Sarah reminds us that although many might struggle to remember the details of their past, people with dementia are still capable of making new memories. Communicating this powerful yet fragile truth is part of Sarah’s growing role as an advocate for people who are advancing in years. Sarah has also teamed up with the chaplain at the local college and there is exciting work being done to bring the young and old together through the creative arts.



### What would you do?

Spend a few minutes talking together about Sarah’s experience.

- What strikes you as being the important emphases in her chaplaincy work?

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- How might you approach and develop this kind of work?

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## Phil: prison chaplain

Phil is a Methodist minister and has been a prison chaplain for the past 15 years. He currently serves for one day a week in a category B prison in the north of England. Phil is part of an ecumenical and multi-faith chaplaincy team which provides a statutory chaplaincy service to the inmates. A prison chaplain must see a new prisoner within 24hrs of admission, make daily visits to the medical wing of the prison and provide an act of worship for the inmates once a week.

Phil's focus is upon being a loving and redeeming presence in a place where love and redemption are in short supply. Phil shows respect and love in simple ways, like asking permission to enter a cell to visit prisoners; although he doesn't need to, he always makes a point of asking because it gives the prisoner dignity. He listens without judgement to the inmates and takes an interest in those who are largely forgotten, even written off. These conversations are signs of hope, a glimpse of the redeeming love of God expressed by a chaplain.

Phil isn't only there for the prisoners but for the staff too. Prison staff work in a very difficult environment and are also often overlooked. Phil spends time caring for the staff and is available to listen and pray. The chaplaincy team are a very important presence in the prison, a sign of hope and restoration in a hard place.

### Chaplaincy tip: keep your keys on a chain

You can always spot a prison chaplain because they keep their keys on a chain! As chaplains go about a prison, unlocking and locking doors as they go, they need to keep focused not only on their keys but also on who else is around. One door left unlocked can cause a serious security problem and is a disciplinary offence.

Prison chaplaincy is an obvious example of chaplains needing to be vigilant and aware of their personal safety at all times. However, all chaplaincy happens in public spaces and an awareness of your surroundings is very important. Working in pairs gives volunteer chaplains the advantage of mutual support, safety and accountability.

## Prophetic outcomes: restorative justice

One of the schemes which Phil has been a part of establishing along with the rest of the chaplaincy team is a restorative justice programme. Restorative justice helps the perpetrators and victims of crime to meet with each other and seek understanding and reconciliation.

The chaplains have witnessed incredible scenes of restoration take place as victims have come to understand something of the life of the prisoner. Perpetrators of crime often start life as the victims of horrendous crimes. Knowing this can release compassion where anger and hatred may have existed before.

Likewise, when the perpetrators of a crime understand something of the deep impact that being a victim of crime has had on a person then the scene is set for forgiveness and reconciliation to take place.

Restorative justice is a very powerful and effective programme which has been shown to cut reoffending rates and is one example of an extra dimension that chaplaincy can bring to a situation.



GROUP CONVERSATION

## Conversation

- How else might chaplains be involved in peacemaking in society?

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FACILITATOR TO READ

## Philippa: Further education college chaplain

Philippa is a chaplain to a higher education college for one day a week. Philippa is bursting with energy and ideas and roams around the college wearing a bright green hoodie with college chaplain written in large letters on her back. In the fast paced, energetic environment of an FE college, Philippa snatches conversations in corridors with students and staff and bounds up to groups of students around the campus.

Although Philippa has a chaplaincy room in the college, she is rarely there apart from when she has an appointment with a student. In less than a year, Philippa has become an indispensable part of college life, getting involved in all kinds of student activities. FE institutions are entrepreneurial and dynamic environments with an ever shifting student and staff population. The wide variety of students and staff means that the college is always evolving. Philippa is dynamic and entrepreneurial in her approach to chaplaincy. Building relationships and being available to respond to opportunities to make a difference are the hallmarks of her chaplaincy work.

Last year, a student was tragically killed in a car accident and Philippa was involved in marking the event in the life of the college. As well being available to students and staff as they processed their grief after losing a friend, Philippa was also able to help plant a beautiful tree within the college grounds which was dedicated to the much loved student. She was also able to help lead a thanksgiving service. As a college chaplain, Philippa helped to mark an important moment in the life of the college. Who knows what else this loved and trusted member of the college community will have to respond to in the years ahead?

### Chaplaincy tip: surprising people with kindness and free cake

Chaplains have to be proactive; you cannot wait for people to come to your office! You have to go out and interact with people. In a fast moving FE college you have to get in people's faces. Early on, Philippa decided to bake cakes and take them to a staff meeting and then hand out free cakes in the corridors to the students. Free cake isn't something that many people get at college! However, people stopped to talk with Philippa and her team of chaplaincy volunteers.

Surprising people with kindness, expressed through free cake and other thoughtful gifts is a powerful witness that can make people think. The college population now associate Philippa and the local church with free, not to mention delicious cake. That's not a bad association!



## Prophetic outcome: prayer spaces

Colleges aren't generally known to be places with free space or time. It isn't unknown for broom cupboards to become office spaces. Not only that, but there is little space in the college timetable.

In response, Philippa decided to give the college the gift of space for a week. The space was sacred space in the form of an interactive prayer room. Colourful and creative, the interactive space captured the imagination of students, parents and teachers as Philippa hosted the prayer space. It was a place where students could hang out and be still, process pain, consider important decisions and remember members of their family and loved ones around the world.

The week of prayer was so successful that it has become a yearly feature in the college calendar and has even been featured on college open days! The gift of sacred space in an environment which often feels squeezed has made a real difference in the college and has inspired others in the area to do similar things.



GROUP CONVERSATION

## Conversation starter

- Chaplaincy is proactive, how do you feel about this?

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READER FROM GROUP

## Town chaplaincy team in the midlands

A local Methodist member called Chris worked in retail for 20 years on the shop floor. He knows what it is like to work in retail and during his retirement wanted to do something meaningful in his local town. In partnership with the local Churches Together group and with the town centre management he started a chaplaincy team. Three years later there are now twelve chaplains in his team from across the churches who volunteer a few hours a week to be present in the town. Having started in the shopping precinct, the chaplaincy team now covers the town hall and civic offices, a local supermarket and a high street bank.

Chris and other local church leaders have approached the local magistrates court and are gathering a team of 20 additional volunteers who will commit themselves to offering a chaplaincy service at the magistrates court during court sessions.

Not only that, but there is also a canal that runs through the town and a few of the chaplains have begun to get to know some of the residents from the local boating community and have now begun to walk the canal pathways on a regular basis.

The chaplaincy team is growing and is well respected in the town. The local churches in the past year have also launched a Street Pastors initiative which serves the thriving night time economy too. Together, the churches are seeing many local Christians serving the daytime and night-time economies and seeing lives changed by being a caring and consistent presence in the town.

### Chaplaincy tip: branding is important

The lay chaplains decided early on that they needed a uniform to identify them. They opted for gilets in the colder months and t-shirts and caps during the summer months. A local artist designed a logo and some literature to hand out to the local shops so that they know what the town chaplains are there for. They have simple cards that they can give to anyone they talk to so that they can get in touch if they ever need to talk further. The town chaplains also have a website and a growing presence on Facebook and Twitter.

The town chaplains brand is becoming well known in the town and the chaplains are often mentioned in the press and invited to town wide events. All of these elements have helped to build a positive presence in the town and those who wear the uniform are recognised as being part of a trusted group of local Christians.

### Prophetic outcome: messy church in the shopping centre

The town centre also has an undercover shopping centre with about 100 shops and a number of empty units. The management recently offered Chris the use of shop space to develop a community hub.

The local churches are putting plans together to host an interactive church service in the shopping centre once a month. During the week they are going to host a community art space, interactive prayer stations and a debt counselling service.

In the spirit of chaplaincy, instead of waiting for people to come to their churches, the local churches are taking a church experience to the hundreds of shoppers who fill the shopping centre on a Sunday morning as well as creating an important community space throughout the week!



GROUP CONVERSATION

## How has your thinking changed?

At the beginning of the first session, we took a snapshot of our thoughts about chaplaincy. We responded to the questions: When you hear the word “chaplain” what comes to mind? Who are chaplains? What do chaplains do?

Spend some time answering the following questions.

- How has your thinking changed over the past five sessions?

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- How might you apply some of the perspectives from chaplaincy to your own life? How might it help you as you witness to the risen Christ?

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## § Conclusions

Hopefully the stories in this session have not only inspired you but also helped you think about what might be possible in your own community. In this session we have seen that:

- Chaplaincy is present, pastoral and prophetic.
- Chaplaincy is a ministry of careful listening as demonstrated by Sarah.
- Simple record keeping can help you to remember the details.
- Chaplains can act as vital networkers in a community; providing social glue!
- Chaplains operate in public spaces and need to be vigilant.
- Chaplains are often called to be peacemakers.
- Chaplaincy is often about snatching conversation on the move.
- Chaplains can help to mark important occasions in the life of a community.
- Chaplains have to go to where people are and engage with them there.
- Branding is really important!
- Chaplaincy teams can become a powerful presence in a town.
- One thing often leads to another; like magistrates courts, canals and community hubs.
- Never underestimate cake!

## Are you a blue fish?

There is one more conclusion that only you can come to. On the cover of the course material, there is an image of a blue fish swimming among gold fish. It is an image that portrays chaplaincy in a powerful way. Chaplains 'swim' among others but remain distinct, bringing something different to a place or an organisation. Chaplaincy is **distinctive** and that quality is a key part of its effectiveness!

Review the course and your notes and prayerfully consider whether God is calling you at this time to be involved in a chaplaincy team in your local area. Whether you are indeed a blue fish!

If you want to become a chaplain, then there are two practical sessions to this course as well as an opportunity to visit a chaplain in their work place.

Chaplaincy already happens in many many different places, yet there is so much more that can be done. It would be amazing to see chaplaincy everywhere! You can be, as the Chaplaincy Development project is, a part of a growing chaplaincy movement.

Take an opportunity to visit our project website for more perspectives and resources on chaplaincy [www.opensourcechaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.opensourcechaplaincy.org.uk)



GROUP PRAYER

## Conclude with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

**Amen.**



FACILITATOR TO READ

## Blessing

May you know the love of the Father.

May you experience the life of the Son.

May you be filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

As you go, may God's wisdom guide you in the way you should go.

To bless a world in need.

For the glory of God, for evermore.

**Amen.**